

## **Race and Power: How Can So Few Rule So Many?**

**Joseph H. Gaines**

### **Introduction**

In pursuit of education in America, people inevitably bring their underlying assumptions about the world; ironically their precious cargo of values, skills, and knowledge, is more often than not, relegated upon entry to the education system, to the periphery of their own formalized educational experience. An alternative social reality and academic trajectory are ushered in as the socio-educational agenda of the state, by and large, is enacted and takes center stage.

A dualism embodied in the presence of a dehumanizing as opposed to a

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humanistic form of education is characteristically proclaimed by educational stewards; although many educators would selfishly argue in opposition. Nonetheless, in light of the appalling academic outcomes in terms of public school education, in particular, the former epitomizes the concrete expression of domination and alienation, while the latter, the struggle for liberation from oppression, which is transformative in nature, is based upon the unity of human agency and reflection (praxis). Freire is quick to remind us that "there is no humanistic dimension in oppression, nor is there dehumanization in true liberation" (1985, pp. 113-114).

Far too often educators are either unaware or inured to the state and how their participation in the construction and maintenance of its socio-educational agenda gives rise to an alienating transference of knowledge and cultural hegemony (see Garcia, 1993).

How does the social construct of knowledge and power emerge within the context of a culturally diverse society such as the United States? What role has been placed on the issue of intelligence and achievement in American education? How does race and culture figure into the acquisition of knowledge and power? and last: What is the function of an education that is multicultural? These are the varied and compelling pedagogical, social, political, and philosophical issues that are to be addressed in the subsequent body of this text.

Let us examine some of the classical perceptions of education and classism which have come down to us through aspects of ancient African and European civilization. From the insight gathered in this effort, we may better understand the underlying framework from which our current American educational model has been fashioned.

### **The Socio-Cultural Dye Is Caste**

Just as in modern times countries such as the United States, England, and France are attracting students from all corners of the globe on account of their leadership in science, technology, and culture, so was it in ancient times that Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek thought and sensibility garnered reverence and respect for their cultural leadership, technology, and learning. More pointedly, it is ancient Egypt that I am most concerned with here, particularly in terms of its significant philosophical, socio-cultural, and educational influence on an emergent Greek society in its nascent history.

The notion that Egypt was a cultural lightening rod is well documented as we learn of the immigration of numerous Greek students to its shores for the purpose

of their education. The following Greek philosophers are mentioned simply to establish the fact that Egypt (c.4000 B.C.) was regarded as the educational center of the ancient world (see Volney, 1978).

Thales is said to have been initiated into the Egyptian Mystery System (a term used by the Greeks to describe Egyptian education) and science (see Thales in Blackwell's source book of philosophy; Zeller's History of Philosophy). The Mystery System much like the university of today, was the center of organized culture. It is also noted that Pythagoras traveled frequently to Egypt for the purpose of his education (see Herodotus Book III 124; Diogenes VIII 3). Plato likewise received a portion of his education under the tutelage of the Egyptian priests (James, 1972 p. 43).

The immigration of Greeks to Egypt for their education was initiated as a result of the Persian invasion (c. 525 B.C.) and continued until the Greeks gained possession of the land and access to the Royal Library, through the conquest of Alexander the Great. Alexandria was thus converted into a Greek city and center of research and made the capital of the newly created Greek empire which was governed by the Ptolemies. Egyptian culture was able to flourish until the edicts of Theodosius in the fourth century A.D. and that of Justinian in the sixth century A.D. In accord with their mandates, the chambers and doors of the Mystery Temples and Schools were closed.

One of the paramount aims of the ancient education system of Egypt was the deification of man. The school of thought taught that salvation could be attained if the soul could be liberated from the bodily fetters; in this way the individual could be empowered to become godlike and see the gods in this life (see Vail, Ancient Mysteries, p. 25). The organizational principle which guided the Egyptian Mysteries was based upon three levels of study: 1) The Mortals, comprised of probationary students who hadn't experienced the inner vision; 2) The Intelligences, which consisted of those students who attained the inner vision, and had received mind or nous; and 3) The Creators or Sons of Light, which exemplified those students who attained true spiritual conscientiousness (see James, 1972, p. 27).

The education of the student initiated in this form of learning not only consisted of the moral and ethical values and behaviors expressed, vis-a-vis, the affective domain of the Ten Virtues, but also instruction in the Seven Liberal Arts (later to be known in medieval universities as the trivium and quadrivium) which were intended to liberate the soul.

Originality is a previously creative and compelling force in any of its myriad forms; in an historical sense, it is no less valuable and consequential when it starts from an idea borrowed from elsewhere. This is made most evident in terms

of the educational, cultural, and philosophical nexus established between ancient Egypt and the peoples of the Aegean who inevitably formed the city-state and consequent Helladic or Mycenaean civilization of Greece, as we know it today. Unquestionably, it can be argued that Greek ideology and ethos was derived as a result of a cross fertilization of ideas, techniques, and institutions from disparate points of cultural contact; most significantly Africa and Asia Minor. This is where the issue of historical originality is most important. It is a curious habit Finley (1981) asserts to almost never credit the people under consideration with any originality, seemingly always to make them out as borrowers and someone else the originator (also see Diop, 1974). This observation has far reaching implications for education and the way we construct, control, and disseminate distinct forms of knowledge in our society through means of formal and nonformal institutions of learning. Far too often the xenophobic reality of bias and cultural misrepresentation has appeared in the historical account of world events in relation to the authorship of the antiquitous Egyptian civilization. Nonetheless, in light of the continually mounting and irrefutable archaeological and scientific evidence amassed, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century, earlier attempts to either mislead, dismiss, or simply ignore the contributions of classical African civilizations to world history have been measurably curtailed (see Sertima, 1991; Ben-Jochannan, 1989).

Looking at early Greek culture during the time of its Golden Age (c. fifth century B.C.), we find strikingly similar theoretical ties with the teachings of the older Egyptian culture in regard to pedagogy and social development. In essence, the Greeks of this period felt that children needed a culturally validated education in order that they might become whole persons and fully responsible and effective members of the society. It was believed that the children would be strongly endowed with high ethical and moral character if this educational philosophy was adhered to. To that end, Keil (1984) contends, the Three M's - Music, Motion, and Morality were used as the tools to build a dynamic Greek society.

Based upon the fundamental establishment of a strong culturally validated education, as previously stated, it can be reasoned that within the social milieu of the ancient Egyptian and Greek societies, culture and class differences, notwithstanding, gender roles, determined in large measure who would gain access to the keys of knowledge and power.

Let us further examine a plausible point of departure in classical Greek thought that may shed light on how contemporary social class differences may have been derived and translated into American social interaction.

## A Classical View of Social Class Differences

Socrates once asserted that the citizens of the Republic should be educated and assigned by virtue of merit to three classes within ancient Greek society: rulers, auxiliaries, and craftsmen. Moreover, he argued a stable society required that these ranks be honored and that citizens accept the status conferred upon them. The question was then asked by Glaucon how can this ascribed status and acquiescence be secured? In order to make this proposition ring true, Socrates fabricates a myth and with embarrassment responds:

I will speak, although I really know not how to look you in the face, or in what words to utter the audacious fiction... He goes on to say:

Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the completion of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honor; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children... Such is the tale; is there any possibility of making our citizens believe in it?

Glaucon replies: Not in the present generation; there is no way of accomplishing this; but their sons may be made to believe in the tale, and their son's sons, and posterity after them. (cited in Gould, 1981, p. 19)

The response rendered by Glaucon was but a prelude of things to come. It set in motion an intellectual, political, philosophical, religious, and social justification for the exploitation, colonization, and genocide of countless indigenous inhabitants of Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Caribbean, and Europe.

Isokrates, the famed Athenian orator, was Plato's great rival and had written previous to Plato's Republic about yet another caste system in which he explored the division of labor and political structure of Egyptian society in his treatise Bousiris, written in 390 BC. Bernal (1988) remarks, "the piece was a eulogy to Bousiris as a mythical lawgiver and to the perfection of the constitution he had devised for Egypt" (p. 103). It is plausible to conceive, as Bernal further notes, Isokrates admired the caste system, the rulership of the philosophers and the rigor of the Egyptian philosopher priests' paidea (education) that produced the *anēr theōrētikos* (contemplative man), who used his superior wisdom for the well being of the state. Although Plato's Republic bears striking similarities and is generally thought to have been written as a result of many years of thought and teaching (between 380 and 370 BC), it is worth reiterating

that the work was written after Bousiris (also see James, 1972; Diop, 1974; Ben-Jochannan, 1989).

Apart from the resemblance to the explicitly Egyptian Bousiris, we know that Egypt, where Plato had spent some time probably around 390 BC, was a central concern of his later works (see Froidefon, 1971, p. 269 n.24 and Davis, 1979, p. 122 n.3).

Early modern scholars such as Marx also associated Plato's treatise with the antequitous African culture of Egypt. As Marx put it: "Plato's Republic, in so far as division of labor is treated in it, as the formative principle of the state, is merely an Athenian idealization of the Egyptian system of castes" (1983, p. 299).

The idea of metals which was previously alluded to in Plato's tale and manifests itself in the form of inherited social class roles, has given way in its modern adaptation to the scientific biological notion of gene theory. Nevertheless, we maintain an etymological representation of the tale when we speak of people's worthiness or disposition as their "mettle."

Inasmuch as the fundamental argument posed by Plato in the opening of this essay—that social and economic roles accurately reflect the innate construction of people, as an intellectual strategy, it is flawed and less compelling as Gould (1981) makes plain the point that "Socrates knew that he was telling a lie" (p. 20).

The same narrative has been promulgated in countless versions and reenacted in the social policies and administration of political and educational systems throughout the Western world, in spite of the fact that its essence was a fabrication. With this framework let us examine further its effect in contemporary social theory and practice in the United States.

### **The Question of Race and Intellectual Misrepresentation**

In modern terminology, the general idea attributed to the ranking of human groups is biological determinism. It is a broad subject which touches upon myriad aspects of the interaction between biology and society since the dawn of modern science. The eugenics movement was engendered as a consequence of this ill-fated proposition. It is a notion which proposes a genetic justification for the differences found between ethnic groups based upon race, class, gender, and economics. It strongly supports the idea that human life and culture can be improved upon if strategies were implemented for genetic improvements. In other words, the concept viewed as a variation of Plato's myth holds that shared behavioral norms and the social and economic differences between groups

based upon races, classes, and gender arise from inherited, inborn distinctions, and that society, in this sense, is an accurate reflection of biology.

The explosive theoretical debate over this assumption, by and large, has been met with great intellectual fervor and emotion. Many scholars rebuke this line of thought (i.e., Margaret Mead, Franz Boas, W.E.B. DuBois, Cornel West). However, there are others (i.e., Paul Broca, Samuel George Morton, Richard Herrnstein, Arthur Jensen) who frame their argument from the perspective of a sociobiologist and are set upon the perpetuation of what I regard as a prejudicial and racist ideology which has guided, in part, the social, political, scientific, religious, and educational philosophy of American society ever since its turbulent evolution. This fact is made even more evident by the historian Howard Zinn (1990), (also see Caird and Foley, 1994), as it is argued that there is no country in world history in which racism has been so significant, for such a long period of time, as in the United States.

"The Bell Curve," written by Herrnstein and Murray (1996) argue as their central premise that intelligence, and thus success is fixed by genetic inheritance. This is unfortunately a widely accepted idea in American *folk wisdom*, even though evidence for this is very weak. A more recent study while examining ethnicity and achievement amongst a sample of some 20,000 adolescent students from four principal ethnic groups (i.e. Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and Whites) Steinburge concluded that school achievement is unlikely to be genetically determined. Other researchers in the field of intelligence testing such as Scarr, Weinberg, and Waldman (1993) further suggest that there is virtually no way to accurately prove that IQ differences between groups are hereditary. Scarr and her colleagues highlight "being reared in the culture of tests and the culture of schools benefits all children's IQ scores" (Cited in D'Souza, p. 454). This perspective is supported by Blau (1981) as it is argued that differences found between disparate racial groups are primarily "social, not genetic, in origin" (pp. XV and 58). (Also see Moore, 1986; Gould, 1995, and Kamin, 1994).

Attributional style which relates to motivation (how much an individual wants to succeed), effort (how hard one exerts themselves), and behavior (the length of time devoted to study) are significant variables found by researchers as reasons for the attainment of academic success. In the United States we place a strong emphasis on what we call natural ability and virtually neglect the role of what psychologists call achievement attributions. The traditional educational message we give to our students, that they are what their grades are, is a dangerous one which is transmitted at the earliest age of a child's formal education. It is in fact, as stated earlier, the opening stage of the dehumanization

of the child.

The first major European scientists to endeavor to classify humankind by race was Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist of the eighteenth century. His publication in 1735 of "*Systemae Naturae*" shook the scientific world. In spite of the early attempts to catalog human types by notable scientists such as: Francois Benier, Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon, and Johann Blumenbach; it was George Cuvier's attempt to construct a racial taxonomy in the nineteenth century which superseded all other scholarly attempts and is referred to even today as the most commonly used classification of human beings (see D'Souza, 1995).

Different arguments for ranking of human groups have persisted and characterized the last two centuries of intellectual thought. Again, this is borne out in the numerical science of the nineteenth century known as craniometry (the study of skull size). However, what craniometry was to the nineteenth century, Gould (1981) purports, intelligence testing has become for the twentieth century. This is particularly true when intelligence is viewed as a single, innate, heritable, and measurable thing.

I would be remiss if I made no mention of Charles Spearman in connection to intelligence and the controversy over its measurement. He is most noted for his theoretical creation of *g*, general intelligence, although later in his career he abandoned the word intelligence due to the persistent arguments and inconsistency of mental testers. Spearman's *g* and its attendant claim that "intelligence is a single, measurable entity," provided the only promising theoretical justification that hereditarian theories of IQ have ever had (Gould, 1981, p. 264). It should be noted that Spearman's primary purpose for his intense study of factor analysis was to study the structure of the human brain, not to be a guide to measure differences between ethnic groups.

In contrast, Cyril Burt, a theoretical psychologist, extended the work of Charles Spearman. However, unlike his colleague, Burt utilized factor analysis as a definite means of examining for mental differences between groups (see Burt, 1959, p. 117, for further discussion about cognition and the 11+ Examinations administered to school age children in England.)

When the esteemed psychologist Alfred Binet began to explore the realm of intelligence and constructed a means for its measurement and educational application in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, he knew full well that the numerical scale that he devised and attributed to French school children's performance based upon their response to a battery of skills could not accurately measure their innate intelligence (see Smith, 1990; Gardner 1985, 1991). As a theoretician, Binet viewed intelligence as too complex to

seize in a single number.

The number produced as an outcome of examination, which would be called intelligence quotient (IQ) in his judgment, was merely a rough, empirical guide constructed for a limited practical purpose. He refused to equate IQ with innate intelligence. Furthermore, he cautioned that the numbers derived from this process were not to be construed as an entity unto itself. He states: "The scale, properly speaking, does not permit the measure of the intelligence because intellectual qualities are not superposable, and therefore cannot be measured as linear surfaces are measured" (cited in Binet and Simon, 1916, p. 40).

More than this, Binet feared that his practical device, if reified as a single measurable entity, could be perverted and used as an indelible label, rather than as a guide for identifying children who needed help. He understood the potentiality that it might be misused by overzealous school administrators and teachers alike to dispose of children who proved to be problematic and undesirable in the classroom. However, he couldn't have imagined the length to which his scale (test) would be used by scholars and commercial interests to buttress both individual and group prejudice and discriminatory practices in American society. This is made most apparent in regard to educational access, immigration law, social theory, military testing practices, and the degree of commercialism sought after as a result of the capitalist profit motive (Yerks, 1921; Kevles, 1968; Reich, 1991).

In the many years that followed Binet's death in 1911, the primary intentions set forth through his work were to be dismantled in the United States by the American Hereditarians. I would like to briefly discuss three of the most prominent scholars of this ilk in order that the reader may better understand the role of these men in the maintenance of institutional and cultural racism in our society. I do not cite these scholars for any special opprobrium in this matter; there were and are, however, many who share their view. The repercussions of their disingenuous actions still reverberate and resound at the core of American society.

H. H. Goodard, unlike Alfred Binet, is a principal player in the interpretation of IQ scores as being measures of a single innate entity. He is also recognized as the man who christened the American term "moron" in the early part of the twentieth century, although many people tend to believe that the label has had a longer and more ancient pedigree. The label comes from a Greek word meaning foolish. Moron was the identification given to individuals who had scored below average on the Binet scale and were identified as feeble-minded or high grade mental defectives. One of the first applications of Binet's scale in America was used by Goodard on Ellis Island as a means of making more

stringent the standard of admission to the United States by immigrants (e.g., Russians, Italians, Hungarians, Jews) and to identify and prevent the entrance of high grade mental defectives (Gould, 1981, pp. 158-174; Brigham, 1923, pp. 197-210).

Lewis M. Terman is noted for the creation and marketing of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test in 1916. It became the model for all other intelligence tests to follow. He standardized the Binet scale so that "average" children would score 100 at each age (mental age equal to chronological age). Again, against the recommendations of Binet, his desire was to test all children. "Terman relentlessly emphasized limits and their inevitability. He needed less than an hour to crush the hopes and belittle the efforts of struggling, well educated parents afflicted with a child of IQ 75" (cited in Gould, 1981, p. 179).

Robert M. Yerks from Harvard University, distinguished himself as the administrator of mental tests to over 1.75 million recruits during World War I. He was responsible for gathering all the significant American hereditarians of psychometrics together to write the army mental test (Alpha and Beta Exams). The significance of what he had done was to establish the first mass-produced written test of intelligence. Binet's purpose was then fully deceived because a technology had been acquired that could test all students.

All three men did exactly what Binet had cautioned against as the IQ test became a perversion of the author's original model and intent. Gould (1981) poignantly makes the claim that if Binet's principles had been heeded, and his examinations used with the consistency he recommended, we might have been spared a major misuse of science in this century. (Also see Lewontin, 1970 and Chideya, 1995).

It has been made evident, thus far, that classicism and xenophobia were very much a part of Western classical thought and early American culture. These incorrigible ideas were used to erroneously justify the social exploitation and misrepresentation of intelligence of Europeans and Non-Europeans alike, especially Africans (in Africa and America), Native Americans, and women as well, while vitriolic attitudes and behaviors were advanced. As we move forward in the next section, further light will be shed on the concept of racism and power and how an attitude of superiority coupled with frustrated rage brought on stronger feelings of domination and aggression rather than unity and cooperation. The argument will also be raised that class and race took great precedent over culture as the need for labor in the American colonies grew, thereby setting the stage for the emergence of slavery.

## **Roots of Racism and Power in Colonial America**

The question then that must be raised is what is racism? What is this torturous logic that fuels the national debate and has engendered such hatred and contempt amongst people for so long a time? How did it start, or more urgently, how might it end? Can education be a factor? Let us look at some possible answers and solutions.

For the purpose of this essay, I will define racism as a function of social relationships between people on the basis of access and distribution of power, labor, wealth, and knowledge. However, it isn't limited to these structures. For instance, when one believes him/herself to be superior to another human being and this perception manifests itself as an action or behavior that is detrimental to the well being of a member/members of a group, solely on the basis of their class, religion, language, or color; that is racism.

According to Mazrui (1986); Piñeiro de Rivera (1989); Ben-Jochannan (1991) and West (1993), racism appears to have its roots in the early encounter between the civilizations of Africa, Asia, and Europe; contacts that were established long before the rise of modern capitalism. Conversely, other scholars such as David B. Davis (1966) and Herbert Aptheker (1971) contend that although there were signs of hostility in the cross-cultural contacts in the remote past the signs were not imbued with any sense of contempt and had no quality of modern racism with its innate immutable inferiority to justify perpetual subordination. More pointedly, racism they purport, is seen as a distinctly modern phenomenon that came into being as capitalism developed and moved toward the subjugation, colonization, and oppression of people of color around the world. Davis further asserts that there was an absence of racial prejudice in the ancient world. However, he does concede that in early Chinese and Indian civilizations, something approaching modern racism had existed (pp. 51-52). The category of "race" denoting primarily physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color for example, was initially employed as a means of classifying human bodies by Francois Bernier, a French physician, in 1784, as previously mentioned. The first substantial racial division of humankind West contends, is found in the influential *Natural System* (1735) of the pre-eminent naturalist of the eighteenth century, Carolus Linnaeus. However, both European scholars exhibit racist propensities in that each degrade and devalue non-Europeans at the level of intellectual codification, ascribed standards of morality, or both.

The research presented by the esteemed Senegalese scholar Chiek Anta Diop

(1992), inasmuch as finds of early substantive documentation of racial division are concerned, provides us with an even earlier find emanating directly from the ancient Egyptians themselves. I make reference to the tomb painting of Ramses III. Diop states:

This painting from the tomb of Rames III (1200 BC) shows that the Egyptians saw themselves as Blacks, and painted themselves as such without possible confusion with the Indo-European or the Semites. It is a representation of the races in their most minute differences, which insures the accuracy of the colors (p. 218).

The differences referred to in the citation include genotype (which pertains to biological or physiological characteristics), as well as phenotype (pertaining to visible outward appearance).

West (1993) further contends in his examination of race and social theory that "xenophobic mythologies and folktales, racist legends and stories such as authoritative Church Fathers' commentaries on the Song of Solomon and the Ywain narratives in medieval Brittany" (p. 262) were present in the daily lives of people long before the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The point is also made that racist perceptions and practices are deeply rooted in Western cultures (e.g., U.S. and South Africa) and become readily potent in periods of political, cultural, or economic crisis. In this, light reference is made to: "The growing presence of Caribbean and Indian peoples in Britain, Africans in Russia, Arabs in France, and Black soldiers in Germany . . ." (p. 270).

Without question, racism has existed for several hundred years prior to its presence in North America. Thus, the argument can be made, Zinn (1990) asserts, that in the incipient stages of development of the American colonies, racism began with the arrival of indentured servants from Africa and Europe, particularly in the English settlement of Jamestown, Virginia, in the year 1619. Through this early cultural contact, some historians assert there is a strong possibility that the Africans were treated and looked upon differently from their European counterparts (also see Williams, 1970).

In any event, as a result of these differences, the brutal condition of slavery was accelerated into a regular institution, which established and set the tone for labor and social relationships between Blacks and Whites in the New World. Some of these conditions have been carried over into contemporary American society and have only been mitigated by acts of concerted individual and community struggle and legal legislation (i.e., Constitutional Amendments, *Brown v. Board of Education* — Topeka, Kansas; the Civil Rights Movement; *Aspira v. Board of Education* — New York City; Lau Remedies, and so on).

In Africa of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, power relationships

amongst different societies and its members like those of Europe were based on agriculture and had hierarchies of obas and chiefs, lords and vassals. Yet in Africa, Zinn (1990) points out, feudalism did not come, as did Europe's, out of the slave societies of Greece and Rome which had virtually destroyed ancient tribal life. In the African context, traditional tribal life maintained its strong influence as some of its more exemplary features — communal spirit and kindness in law and punishment remained intact (Davidson, 1961).

Everything in the experience of the early colonists in America served as a pressure for the enslavement of Africans. By this I refer to the harshness of the environmental and psychological conditions and circumstances endured by the English colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, particularly during the Winter of 1609-1610, a period referred to as the "starving time." In this period the colonists were reduced to roaming the woods in a crazed state for berries and nuts; they were forced by hunger to exhume graves to eat the corpses, and witnessed their numbers reduced from five hundred to sixty. This disquieting reality acted as an acute reminder for the Virginian colonists of 1619, some of whom were survivors of the 1609 ordeal. They too found themselves desperate for labor and the ability to grow enough food to stay alive.

In the Journals of the House of Burgesses in Virginia we find the account of the first twelve years of the Jamestown colony. The document speaks to the severity of the times:

...driven through insufferable hunger to eat those things which nature most abhorred, the flesh and excrement of man as well as our nation as of an Indian, digged by some out of his grave after he had lain buried three days and wholly devoured him; others, envying the better state of body of any whom hunger has not yet so much wasted as their own, lay wait and threatened to kill and eat them . . . . (Cited in Zinn, 1990, p. 24)

The Virginians needed labor to grow corn for subsistence and to grow tobacco for export. They couldn't force and enslave the Native Americans to work for them as Columbus had done, even though they were armed with superior firearms. The indigenous population was defiant, tough, resilient, and resourceful. Most important, they were on their land, in their woods — Englishmen and women were not. We also need to bear in mind that because the Africans were also foreign to the land, didn't speak the language of the colonizers or Native Americans, and possessed alien religious beliefs, different philosophical and moral value systems, they were especially vulnerable to the subjugation and exploitation of the European colonists.

The feelings of ineptness and frustrated rage experienced by the English in regard to their inability to adequately survive and compete in the so-called New

World, engendered feelings of animosity, contempt, and brutality toward the indigenous population. It was especially difficult when they saw how well the Native Americans interacted with their environment and prospered while they (the colonists) with their advanced technology at their disposal, were made to subordinate themselves, for lack of knowledge and industry, to a people whom they regarded as “uncivilized” and “savage.”

We cannot overlook that the Native Americans of the Iroquois Confederation — the same perceived “uncivilized” people with whom the founding fathers (e.g., Benjamin Franklin, George Washington) sought council within the design of an operative colonial system of government; also were instrumental in serving as a model for the unification of the original thirteen colonies. The Native Americans’ form of government by consensus had already been a well established fact (Weatherford, 1988; Johansen, 1982).

I would suggest that the psychological state of mind expressed by the Europeans through their actions validated their own sense of superiority to another group of human beings. But being unable to realize this attitude by any means other than aggression and violence, made the Virginians especially ready to become the masters of slaves. This xenophobic attitude and attendant behavior is crucial in our understanding of the psychology of racism. As I’ve mentioned earlier, racism is a function of social relationships built on the basis of access to power, knowledge, wealth, labor, culture, language, and so on. In the midst of this sociocultural arrangement Corson (1991) asserts, “Language is the vehicle for identifying, manipulating, and changing power relationships between people” (p. 231). It, too, is an instrument of domination; however, it garners little power that is independent of human agency, structures, and social institutions (Wright, 1987; Shor and Freire, 1987; Delany and Hearth, 1993).

We always make a choice in our communication with others. We can either take the collaborative path of human interaction which often yields mutual respect and validates the worth of an individual or group, or we may choose the road of aggression and domination which to a large degree curtails common understanding, cohesiveness, and gives rise to conflict, perpetual crisis, and fear. Racism embraces the latter of these routes and is the corridor through which many of the early American colonists chose in their encounters in what was to them a New World. Furthermore, the caustic attitudes verbally expressed through stereotypes and derogatory language, combined with the actions taken by the Europeans toward the Native Americans, Africans, and poor Whites corroborates the assertion forwarded by West (1993) that racist perceptions and practices become readily potent, particularly, in times of crisis. This proposition holds true today as much as it did in our earlier history.

In the book entitled *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Morgan (1975) imagines the mood of the colonists. He writes:

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indian's. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages . . . . But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract anything. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did. . . . And when your own people started deserting in order to live with them, it was too much . . . . So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned their villages, burned their cornfields. It proved your superiority, in spite of your own failures. And you gave similar treatment to any of your own people who succumbed to their savage ways of life. But you still did not grow much corn. (cited in Zinn, 1995, p. 25)

Once again, it is plausible to suggest that the colonists clearly experienced feelings of powerlessness as a result of their lack of survival skills in contrast to their perceived rivals. This triggered what I'll refer to as a primal psychological survival technique or strategy which manifests itself as a need to presume racial superiority, a need to conquer, to rule, to alter their feelings or subordination; while the option of collaboration was discarded for the values of domination and aggression. More significantly need — especially hidden need places a strong pressure on perception. What I mean by this is that the colonists came to their new environment already predisposed by their values, education, and experiences to view the Native Americans, Africans, and other non-Europeans as inferior to their established way of life. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, their need to envision these people in the negative light of racial supremacy satisfied their veiled predisposition for ascribed superior social status and power. It is Plato's myth revisited — the "tale" played out, in this occasion, by the colonial Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans. This, in part, is still the prevailing attitude that is at the heart of the race issue in American today.

Steele (1992) reminds us that the oldest formula for aggression known to man is premised on the basis of difference — which fuels and justifies the pursuit of power and domination over another. Wherever great importance is given to race, it is argued, power is the primary motivation. The key point raised here is that moral power precludes racial power by denouncing race as a means to power (Washington, 1986).

As the years passed and the colonies grew, poor Whites feeling disenfranchised by their lack of wealth, their inability to own land, vote, or gain substantial political access, began to rebel against the rising new colonial aristocracy. Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 vividly illustrates this point. Slave

rebellions, Indian insurrections, and violence were also on the rise in seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial America. The crucial point here is that racism was becoming more and more a practical device used by the very rich to divide and engender conflict between Native Americans, Africans, and poor, uneducated European Americans.

The aspect of non-European culture was systematically invalidated as race and class differences were emphasized to further polarize and exacerbate any hope of discontented White colonists from ever merging with the Blacks and Native Americans. Morgan (1975) asserts, on the basis of his careful examination of slavery in Virginia, that racism is not a "natural" condition of Black/White difference but something emanating out of class scorn, a realistic device for control. He states:

If freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done. The answer to the problem, obvious if unspoken and only gradually recognized, was racism, to separate dangerous free Whites from dangerous Black slaves by a screen of racial contempt. (Cited in Zinn, 1990, p. 56)

Still another control used by the ruling elite as the colonies grew was the development of yet another form of social caste, the White middle class (i.e., small planters, independent farmers, merchants, city artisans). It served as a solid buffer against African slaves, frontier plains Indians, and very poor Whites. The presence of the middle class has had crucial consequences for the maintenance of the ruling elite throughout American history.

More compelling, however, is that in order for the upper classes to rule and maintain power, concessions had to be made to the middle class without relinquishing their hold to wealth and power. This pact was entered into and made at the expense of people of color, as well as necessitous Whites. It illustrates a critical point about the nature of power made by Frederick Douglass in 1857, in response to a later period in America's social evolution where he argued that "... power concedes nothing without a demand, it never did, and it never will" (Cited in Quarles, 1969, p. 354).

Steele (1992) corroborates this notion as he acknowledges that humans almost never pursue power without convincing themselves that they are entitled to it. This point is applicable in modern times as is the case of the Kurds and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda, the racial strife in America, the Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, and in the not so distant past — the Nazis and Jews in Germany.

Returning again to the issues of class struggle and power previously mentioned in connection to the colonial period, the ruling group Zinn (1990)

explains, in the 1760s and 1770s found a propitious device — something more powerful than loyalty or material advantage. That device was “the language of liberty and equality” (p. 58), which could unite just enough Whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality.

I have attempted to expose the unreconcilable social cancer of racism because I feel its effects have done great moral, ethical, and spiritual harm to the existing fabric of the nation. Oppression, intolerance, ignorance, violence, and fear are the perennial offsprings of this scourge and its demand, should we dare choose to obey it, and ignore the lessons of our past, will lead us I fear precipitously to the brink of disaster as a people.

The overt presence of racism in our nation’s past with its more subtle, covert appendages of discrimination, exclusion, and indifference in our present, clearly sustains a system of social, political, economic, and educational inequality. Our youth, should this state of affairs be permitted to continue, will languish perilously in a demoralizing educational system which renders them inept and ill-prepared to meet the social, economic, technological, and scientific exigencies of a new world order. Children of color and of low socioeconomic background are especially at risk and susceptible to the consequences of this ominous scenario: this—in spite of the fact that there is no other nation that educates its most fortunate and talented children as well as does the United States (Reich, 1991, Kozol, 1991). Spring (1991) remarks: Educational opportunity has little meaning if students gain access to an education and then are taught they are inferior” (p 111).

We can ill afford the price of intolerance, for the insidious effects of racism have deeply ensnared us in a web of distrust and miseducation. A people who are made to feel dehumanized socially and educationally alienated; whose culture, values, and spirituality are persistently invalidated, W.E.B. Du Bois once argued, will see themselves as invisible; they will begin to lose touch and even deny their own identity, purpose, history, traditions, struggle, and community. This is a fate to be feared more than reality itself.

For many Americans in the richness of our pluralistic society, the American dream has become an American nightmare (Giroux, 1988, Walsh, 1991, Marable, 1993)

In a democracy, freedom of mind not only requires the absence of legal constraints but the presence of alternative thoughts (Bloom, 1988). Assuming this is the case, what then does an education that is multicultural and cultural democracy signify to a people living in a democratic society such as the United States?

## Democracy and Multicultural Education

The notion of democracy is derived from the Greek words *demos* and *kratos*, meaning rule by the people or the many; because there were so many poor in Greek society, it was taken to mean rule by the poor. Historically Arblaster (1987) contends, democracy has never been realized without a struggle and that struggle has always been tied to the pursuit of social and economic equality. Democracy cannot effectively function where there is no sense of common aspiration or common interest, and this cannot develop where a basis of social and economic equality is absent. Arblaster expands this idea when he states:

Democracy needs a foundation not only of shared values but also of shared experience, so that people identify with the political system to which they belong, and can trust its procedures and outcomes. It is also necessary that no significant ethnic minorities feel themselves to be permanently excluded from power and influence; that groups and individuals sense that they are roughly equal in their ability to influence the outcome of communal policymaking; and that those outcomes embody what people recognize to be the general interest of society . . . . (p. 78)

For Dewey (1916), a democracy requires citizens who are capable of critical thought and collective social action. These traits, he argued, are developed by practicing reflective thought and social decision making in the schools, the ideal social laboratory for nurturing an informed and active citizenry. Nonetheless, Freire (1978), speaking to the issue of democracy, contends that without dialogue, self-government cannot exist. He makes reference to the idea of free and creative consciousness (transitive consciousness) that results from dialogue indispensable to authentic democratic environments. He elaborates by saying:

Democracy requires dialogue, participation, political and social responsibility, as well as a degree of social and political solidarity . . . . Before it becomes a political form, democracy is a form of life, characterized above all by a strong component of transitive consciousness. Such transitivity can neither appear nor develop except as men (and women) are launched into debate, participating in the examination of common problems. (pp. 28-29)

What we draw from this discussion is that a student's ability to participate and enter into dialogue with the classroom, and as a result, participate in a democratic social process in the world is critically connected to the development of voice — that is voice that empowers students to actively engage in discourse and make themselves heard and understood, as well as the manner in which they define themselves as social beings. The concept of student voice Giroux (1988) asserts:

. . . represents the unique instances of self expression through which students affirm their own class, culture, racial, and gender identities. A student's voice is necessarily shaped by personal history and distinctive lived engagement with the surrounding culture. (p. 199)

Most schools and classrooms do not practice democracy nor do they develop students' powers of decision making, critical thinking, and collective action. The potential to do so, however, is there and makes this idea attractive to advocates of cultural studies or multicultural education with a social reconstructionist approach. Social reconstructionism as Brameld (1956) puts it, is a recognized philosophical orientation toward education. It offers a "critique of modern culture" (p. 37) and proposes constructive alternatives that may be used to ameliorate existing states of oppression and social inequalities, for instance: race, social class, gender, disabilities, and the like. This approach aims to prepare students to reconstruct society in order that it may better serve the interest of all groups of people, especially those who are of color, poor, female, or disabled. With its visionary character, Brameld (1956) expands the notion of social reconstructionism as being a utopian philosophy. By this he explains:

Utopian does not here connote a flight from reality into a realm of totally unrealizable, fantastic perfection . . . the impractical daydreamer . . . . The vision of utopianism is, rather, a realizable one -a vision of what can be and should be attained in order that man (and woman) may be happier, more rational, more humane than he (or she) had ever been (pp. 24-25); (also see Piaget, 1952; Arnowitz and Giroux, 1985; Vygotsky, 1986; Asante, 1988)

The insightful words of the late British novelist George Bernard Shaw (1921) best capture the ethos of this perspective. He remarked: "You see things, and you say, Why? But I dream things that never were; and I say, Why not?" (Back to Mathuselah, Part I, Act II).

In accord with Ramirez and Casteneda (1974), Freire (1985), Darder (1991), and others, recognition of democracy as a site for struggle is significant to the issue of cultural democracy and its emancipatory effect. In this light, struggle is focused specifically on the issues of culture, knowledge, and power and who controls cultural truths. As a working definition for purposes of this essay, power may be understood as "the ability to control the actions of other people and the ability to escape from the control of others" (Spring, 1991b; p. 45). This assertion holds true as it has been shown previously through the social and cultural encounters between the various ethnic groups throughout American history (also see Aptheker, 1971; Rodriguez de Laguna, 1987; Gaines and O'Neill, 1991; Chrisman and Allen, 1992).

Historically, traditional education has maintained a slavish adherence to

structuring its programs around subject based studies (science education) or disciplinary/administrative categories (curriculum and instruction). This practice fosters a type of intellectual division of labor. In this context students rarely have opportunities to examine large social issues. The attachment to the organization of curricula around the core disciplinary subjects Giroux (1994) suggests is at odds with the field of cultural studies which gives voice to critical pedagogy, bilingual-bicultural studies, as well as multicultural education: whose theoretical energies are largely geared toward interdisciplinary issues such as: "textuality and representation refracted through the dynamics of gender, sexuality, subordinated youth, national identity, colonialism, race, ethnicity, and popular culture" (p. 280).

For the most part, education has been used to control others by the distribution of knowledge that builds allegiance to ruling elites, and cajoles the individual into accepting their position of subordination in society. With this view Alicea (1990) argues education has, by and large, ignored the humanistic approach which takes into account the students as total persons and builds upon their experiences and expectations. Educational facilitation with its humane quality in education, he contends, offers a viable educational approach which crystalizes a much needed reciprocal and dynamic learning process; a process which constructively challenges and supports both educator and student in the development of values and acquisition of knowledge.

Moreover, Spring (1991b) observes, as is currently the situation, if knowledge is perceived as a means to an end, equating simply to the attainment of a job, or the building of a career, then it denies to individuals an education that would enable them to raise critical questions about power relationships. In other words, if individuals only see their place in the educational process as a function of employment need, yet fail to recognize that education is the social apparatus through which one's liberation or oppression will be determined; the realization of personal and positive social reconstruction and associative action will be significantly curtailed by the time the students finalize their formal studies — should they be able to maintain academic focus (also see Ramirez, 1990).

In an educational process, the exposure to and acquisition of specific kinds of knowledge and the value attributed to these forms of information (i.e. practical, technological, scientific, philosophical, and the like) impinge, in large measure, upon the extent of an individual's attainment of power within a truly democratic society. Once again, this idea — a form of intellectual division of labor, can be seen as a retelling of Plato's myth, the "tale" of assigned social class roles originally cast in the mold of heredity and represented by the metaphorical designations of metals (gold, silver, brass) or mettle (worthiness) of a person.

However, the organizing principle which guides this perception, and has been mirrored in social and pedagogical practices (tracking, labeling), particularly for children of color and women, no longer rests solely on the erroneous assumption of innate ability but rather on more subtle sociological and cultural grounds as we find in the dialectic involved in the controversy over nature/nurture. The invidious argument of socially induced inferiority also known as the "vicious cycle theory" espoused by Gunnard Myrdal (1944) and others is as spurious as those utterly demolished assumptions held previously in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Aptheker, 1971).

The contradiction between an espoused theory of democracy and the lived experience of injustice and discriminatory practices is extensive in the United States. The disequilibrium between democratic theory and practice is greatly responsible for the racial and social tension which resides in a tenuous relationship between subordinate or oppressed cultural groups (e.g., Latinos, African Americans, Asians, Haitians) and the public schools' pedagogical aim which centers around the perpetuation of cultural domination and technocratic control.

Invariably, we cannot escape that the basic cause of unrest among oppressed people lies not in outside forces but in oppression itself. To begin to ameliorate the feelings of distrust, alienation, and fear of the other in our society and schools in particular, educators will first have to look deep within themselves and initiate the needed first step toward self-reflection and healing. As an educational body of professionals, by and large, we haven't been totally honest with ourselves or the children (young adults) for whom we serve; although our hopes and expectations have been laudable, they fall short of the knowledge, skills, and compassion that will be required of them to meet the ethnological, scientific, economic, and social demands of our society and community of nations. The need for substantive pedagogical change is evident throughout an ailing educational system which finds itself ill-equipped and unprepared, at present, to face the rising tide of inevitable social and technological transformation.

Education that is multicultural offers a viable avenue for learning which begins to alter the course of educational disillusionment and redresses the reality of our students' miseducation. This is achieved by facilitating learning by means of a student-centered, humanistic approach which validates and gives voice to both students and teachers alike.

### **A Response for Constructive Pedagogical Change**

In response to a climate of social injustice and economic exploitation in the United States, the foundation on which the notion of multicultural education

stands was established. Out of the ferment of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, African Americans initiated a campaign for justice and equality in the United States which was unprecedented in its history. The major goal of this struggle was to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations, housing, employment, and education (Banks and Banks, 1993).

The effects of the civil rights movement had a significant influence on educational institutions as ethnic groups — initially African Americans and then other groups (i.e. Latinos, Native Americans, Asians) fought for educational reform in their curricula so that they would better reflect their experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives. However, this was not to be done in a revisionistic manner. In the process, the missing pages of world history were to be told.

A demand for more teachers and administrators of color was also heard. The broader representation of professionals would serve as positive role models for their children. Community control was an important aspect of the educational reform effort. Ethnic groups pushed hard for access to control of their community schools, selection, and updating of textbooks to make them reflect the diversity of peoples in the United States.

The initial responses of schools and educators to the ethnic movements nonetheless were hurried. Simply stated, school reform in the 1960s and 1970s overall was rushed and not well planned. Ethnic studies emerged and were characterized by their focus on one particular ethnic group. Usually students of that group being studied attended the classes. The women's rights movement also made its presence felt in this period and became a powerful voice for social, political, economic, and educational reform. This response for change continues to be heard through the collective work of a diverse group of women from the areas of education, science, social activism, business, engineering, the arts, and literature (i.e., Sonia Nieto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gloria Steinam, Patrici Cowings, Christine Darden, Carol Gillingham, Maya Angelou, and many others). Advocates for citizens with disabilities also made significant social demands and won important legal mandates. One of the first and most notable being the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142).

In effect, multicultural education has emerged as a consequence of twenty to twenty-five years of struggle. What it is not, is any one identifiable educational program or course. Most important, it is a perspective which recognizes the richness of cultures and the worth and dignity of all people and their attendant histories, experiences, traditions, and values. Through this perspective, an attempt to validate and empower students and to allow their voices to be heard and comprehended as differences and commonalties of cultures, genders,

religions, and tolerances are grappled with in a learning process which engages critical discourse and reflection, as well as individual and cooperative agency.

As other scholars have contended (Grant, 1978; Colombo, et al. 1989; Evans, et al. 1992; Sleeter and Grant, 1993), the expression Education that is Multicultural signifies that the entire educational program be redesigned to reflect and embrace the concerns of diverse cultural groups. Rather than being one of several kinds of education, it is an orientation and an expectation of excellence for the entire educational process.

## Conclusion

What multicultural education (cultural studies) offers educators is a viable theoretical framework for addressing the shifting attitudes, desires, and representations of a new generation of youth who have come to see themselves caught in an encroaching tide of diminishing hopes and expectations. This point is made most apparent when African American and Latino males/females, for example, disparage one another and view the excellence of academic achievement attained by their peers as an attempt to emulate a White European standard — rather than recognizing that the standard of academic and cultural excellence is a hallmark of their own cultural legacy. What we are witnessing is a continuing sense of “nobodyness,” a pathology of “cultural invisibility” which has been born out of years of cultural hegemony and educational neglect. It is Plato's myth revisited.

Central to the concerns of educators should be the realization that we are dealing with a new generation of youth forged by the seductive intersection of electronic imagery, popular culture, and a changing economic world order. Multicultural education or education that is viewed from myriad contexts does more than merely provide a lens for resituating the construction of youth — by this, I mean affording them an active rather than passive voice in the process of their learning. It also presents a new vantage point from which to rethink the relationship between culture and power, knowledge and authority, learning and experience. Giroux (1994) makes the point that public education and particularly the university has long been linked to a notion of national identity which is greatly defined by its commitment to transmitting Western culture. There is no fault in this; but traditionally this has been a culture of exclusion, one that has ignored the multiple narratives, histories, and voices of culturally and politically subordinated ethnic enclaves.

The proliferation of electronically mediated culture to all spheres of intellec-

tual and artistic life has moved away from the traditional disciplines designed to preserve "common culture" to the hybridized fields of comparative and international education, comparative and world literature, media studies, society and technology, ecology, and so on. The implication is clear; education cannot remain in an exclusionary mode when our present and future national, as well as international relationships forcibly speak to the dire need of a more cooperative, inclusionary perspective.

The concern with culture and its nexus to power has necessitated a close examination of the relationship between knowledge and authority, past events and social contexts. The exploration of these issues and how they deliberately or otherwise shape students' understanding of accounts of the past, present, and future are fundamental to an education that is multicultural.

In sum, multicultural education provides a "transformative language" for educating teachers and administrators around the relevancy of public service (Giroux, 1994). In this light, teacher education is fashioned not in the likeness of a particular dogma, but rather through pedagogical practices that take into account changing contexts creating the necessary conditions for students to be critically attentive to the historical and social nature of their changing world and values.

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